

Hello, everyone. Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome to the Yoga For All Training. Amber and I are so excited to have you be a part of this revolutionary teacher training. Amber and I have been presenting this information and teaching this particular course for the last seven years, and we've graduated thousands of teachers from this course and, dare I say, changed the way in which yoga has been taught, modern postural yoga being taught to all kinds of bodies with all kinds of abilities. I'm very proud to be a part of what I like to consider the revolution in the way that we teach yoga, in the way that we share yoga, in the way that we talk about yoga, and how we apply the principles of teaching, of practicing, of learning, and of contemplation into our real world life experiences.

So in this module, we will be talking about yoga and body image, and we'll also be touching on the accessibility part of that as well. So what we'll touch on in this particular module is principles and foundations for creating relationships of self-respect and self-acceptance within your body, and helping your students find their way to body neutrality, body autonomy, and body respect. So these are the things that we will be touching on in this particular module. I'm excited to share this with you. So let's step in to it.

The syllabus we will be preparing for the successful completion of the course. So there's a little bit of a bait and switch in this particular module because I want you to be able to finish this course to get the most out of it. I know over the last couple of years we had been taking a lot of online learning because that's what's been available and that's what's been keeping us safe at this particular time. So sometimes we sign up for a lot of different online trainings and we don't actually finish them, myself included.

So I want you to finish this one. I want you to be able to take what we learn in this course right now and apply it to what you have learned or what you're using in your yoga classes right away. So I don't want it to be one of these classes where you sign up for it and you don't finish it because I think it can be really helpful in navigating this brave new world, where we maybe both teaching online and teaching in the personal yoga setting, whether it's a yoga studio or a community center or a senior center or out in a gym.

So there's going to be lots of different things going on. I know a few of you may be teaching in spaces where you're both online and in-person teaching at the same time. So, there's lots of new variables that are coming to the table in teaching. So there's a lot of new skillsets that we have to learn in this brave new world, and we're here to help you navigate through that while teaching the principles of yoga and body positivity.

We are going to be talking about the foundations and setting the groundwork for body neutrality, acceptance, and respect. We're going to be talking about consent in this particular module, using props and tools for adapting asana, progressive teaching, which is one of my absolutely favorite things to do, class planning, and creating innovative warmups.

So we're going to step outside the mat, there I say, of conventional yoga teachings into something that is a little bit more innovative, creative, personalized, customized, and something that creates a space where we all feel like we belong, we all feel brave to explore what it is that we can do with our bodies, and to create a sense of respect for your bodies that, "Maybe this posture isn't for me at this time, but here are a number of other things I can do that have the similar benefit and may have a different shape or a different orientation," and being okay with that.

Being in a classroom full of people and seeing people doing all kinds of different things in their bodies and embracing that practicality on the mat, being able to do what your body can do without shame, without judgment, without blame, without feeling like you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing. We as yoga teachers and practitioners having the freedom to create our own variations and

modifications in a space when you're in a space and everybody is doing something, you feeling comfortable enough to take the initiative to do something else.

Even when I'm teaching, I always say something like, "I love to see people adapting and customizing the asana practice for them in the space." Who knew pigeon could look so many different ways, right? Just as pigeons, the birds themselves, look a lot of different ways so can the posture itself in all kinds of different bodies, whether those bodies are practicing with disabilities, whether those bodies are older and stiff, whether those bodies are abundant and plus size, whether those bodies are strong and athletic. It doesn't matter.

Everything is going to look different because our bodies are different and embracing that not everybody is the same, that our experiences vary, our bodies vary, and that as much as we'd like to think that there are universal principles and I'm putting that in air quotes, universal principles around alignment, they don't always did every kind of body, right? A universal principle that was created on a flexible, abled body person can in no way be exactly the same for a body that is bigger or a body that has a disability or a body that is stiffer.

We need to realize that when we're looking at the models and the writings in a lot of our yoga textbooks, they're very much based on an abled body perspective. They're very much dealing with a body with flexibility and no disabilities or no limitations. A lot of these books where you see the postures being demonstrated are often demonstrated by a very abled body, flexibly, often young, often a person that is gifted with a particular set of genetics, whether that's body proportion or hypermobility or an athletic presence. So we're seeing a lot of these yoga books and yoga teaching methods, as well as things that we used to teach with are really based on the model of a non-disabled body, of a flexible body, of an athletic body, and often of a smaller size body.

So how do we adapt all that knowledge that was created of very specific kind of body into the world where everybody is present and make everybody understand that trying those is going to look different in my body, in your body, and in someone else's body and be okay with that. Can we start to let go of the imagery we have seen our entire postmodern postural yoga existence here in the West something that looks very perfect?

So it wasn't until I saw the popularization of social media that I was able to see a plethora, my favorite word this week, a plethora of bodies doing similar poses and how that looked, and really disrupting that narrative of perfection, if you will.

So, let's continue on that path. Let's figure out how we continue to adapt and create innovation in the way that we teach so that people from all sizes and all abilities can feel like this belongs to them as well. We're going to do that in the body image module. Okay. So let's start.

How are we going to be successful in this course? First of all, schedule time to take the course to do the work. Grab your diary, your electronic planner. If you have a paper calendar, if you write things down on a to-do list, make sure you either put fingers to keypad, pen to paper or voice to voice recording on how you are going to set up time to do your class.

I always schedule the same way I schedule a doctor's appointment. I actually do schedule time for myself whether that's to go for a walk or to ride or to paddleboard or to do the things that I want to do. I actually schedule that into my calendar. If you look at my calendar, there's a big block of time schedule, though. I think I turned off my phone, but I'm going to show you quickly my calendar because I always block out time. It happens to be Saturday today so I don't have anything else going on and I blocked out this entire day to do this module.

If you look at my phone, I blocked out time for me. So, I blocked out from 6:00 to 9:00 AM in the morning because I'm an early riser, and I blocked that out as me time. So anywhere between 6:00 and

9:00, having to be done at 9:00 AM, this is me time. So that's the time I usually do my yoga practice or my Pilates practice or I workout. So I set that aside and it's every single day on my calendar just so I know, but I don't necessarily do it every single day, but I know that I'm setting aside that time.

So, grab whether it's your electronic calendar, pen to paper, a voice memo, however it is you record your schedule and set aside that time. I would recommend if you could set aside two hours a week, I would say two to four hours a week to sit down with this material, right? Sitting down with this material may be that you download the audio and you play it on your mp4 player, mp3 player, on your mp3 player or if people still do this. Remember when we used to burn things to discs? I don't think we do that anymore or listen to it in your car or sit and actively take notes.

So, for me, when I'm learning something new, especially as an adult, I have to take pen to paper or fingertips to keyboard because that's the way I learn. I learn by writing things down and doing things repetitiously. So, when I was in my 200-hour teaching training, I was having a really hard time digesting the sutras.

So I made it a point of finding the sutras as a book on tape and listening to them over and over again as I was driving my kids to soccer or being out in the world or gardening. Instead of listening to a podcast, I would listen to the sutras or I would listen to the philosophy or I spend a lot of time actually listening to Doug Keller because back in the day, I used to study with him quite a bit. He used to do these CDs on yoga philosophy, CDs on meditation, and I would buy those CDs all the time and put them on my phone or put them on my mp3 player and then listen to them when I was waiting for my kids at the doctor's office or just had some free time or was walking I would listen. Then I would come back and listen to them again and actively take notes.

So the first thing I do when I'm studying anything new is I scan the material just really quickly. I just go through it quickly, maybe make a couple of notes in the margins to come back to it later. That's something that catches my eye. So if I'm flipping through a book and something catches my eye, I'll either take a sticky note and tag it or if it's my own book, I might write in the margin or on the book or I might get those little flags and flag it so that when I come back around again that I will spend a little bit more time on it.

So that's something I learned when I was in the university is to do a nice general overview of the material just so you get your first little taste for it, and then you can come back and drill down into the things that catch your attention or the things that seem like you're like, "This is interesting. I want to read deeper," and not only could you read deeper from the materials that we give you, but you might have the opportunity to go further and do more reading by checking out what we have as our resource list.

I have a lifelong learning list that I'm going to add to the training that you'll be able to look at. It's in a Google Doc so I'm constantly updating it when I take trainings, when I teach trainings, when people recommend books to me. I continue to add this to the list and the list is, I think, as it stands now in September of 2021, I believe the list is nine pages long. So whenever you get to this training, it might be even longer because it's one of those things that are constantly growing and constantly evolving and things are constantly changing.

Another thing you can do is to join the Facebook group. So you're connecting with lots of other teachers who have been through this course, as well as many other adaptable and accessible yoga courses that can add some more information to your learning. This is yet another resource is talking to each other.

So when I took my first 200-hour training course, we did a lot of going through each other's classes and talking about what we liked about each other's classes and what could have room for improvement. So there's a lot of feedback. You have to develop a thick skin so to speak because there's always a lot of

feedback and I just always try to remember that the feedback, especially in spaces like this where we're all learning collectively, was to help me become a better teacher and that this was not a personal attack.

So, it's really great if you can get together in a study group. So if you want to reach out to the people in your cohort and find out if people want to develop a steady group, that's been really helpful. In my 300-hour teacher training that I run people do that. They get together and have a steady group and go through the material and discuss it, which I think is really great.

Also, what I think is really cool is when you start putting together your flows that you want to teach out in the world, the Facebook group can be a really great place to upload that flow and get feedback from your fellow teachers, especially if you're like, "Okay. I'm subbing an accessible yin class tonight. Does anybody have any tips on that?" or if you've created a flow that you really like, you can place it up on the Facebook page.

What I do because my memory is really short is I usually set up my phone when I'm practicing because I want to do the practice again, and I end up using that as content. You will learn more about that in teaching online and creating your online presence in this course, but I found it's really cool. When I'm talking myself through the flow, then when I go back and do the flow again, I can see what information needs to be refined. Maybe I can explain something a little bit better so that I don't have any disruptions in my class or my cuing is unclear or I'm getting what I call tangled up in my words.

So I think it's really good to incorporate and reach out to the people in the Facebook group and connect. Hopefully, you will make lifelong friendships in this teaching training, and it's a great way to connect because it gives you an opportunity to talk to other teachers who are doing the same work as you and to learn from each other. Sometimes just going through another teacher's yoga class can be almost like taking workshop because you're noticing how they're sequencing. You're noticing what cues they're giving.

Unfortunately for me, I have a very hard time turning off the teacher in a yoga class, which is why I always go to the front of the room so I'm not looking at everybody else behind me, but if you're in the room and you're going there as a little bit for inspiration on what to teach in your class, you can look around and see what other students are doing and see what some students might be doing as their own personal customization of a pose, which is something that I learn a lot. I learn customizing my own body and then I learn when I teach a pose or instruct pose and somebody is struggling with it and watching what they do in their own bodies that give me ideas on how I can break this pose down further for a person who has a similar body type or a similar set of limitations as I'm seeing that happening in realtime.

So what's really cool is when you're teaching is watching your students and when you're in class, if you're in class for inspiration, to also watch what the students are doing because that might give you ideas. So if you're always in this learning mode, being open to suggestion and open to ideas, you can really develop your technique as a teacher quite successfully because it goes far beyond the book. It goes to the practicum of teaching modern postural yoga, talking to other teachers, connecting in the Facebook group, all the things.

So give yourself a chance and try taking another class or two because language can really give you some insight, cuing can give you some insight, music can give you some insight, and just watching how even the more popular teachers in your space teach, and see what makes them popular. Are they really kind with their language? Do they give lots of breaks? What kind of students are attracted to that particular class or that particular teacher because it can give you insight as to why maybe people are attracted to your class, and how you want to present yourself. So these are some tools that I think are really important in this class and in this course. Okay.

Oops, I think I skipped one. I'm just going to go back one. Okay. So second, you have one year to complete this course. So I'm going to say that again because it never fails. I always get an email saying, "I'm not sure how long I have." Inside your teaching portal, there's a countdown. There's a screen I think at the beginning that tells you, "From today you have six months," or "From today you have four months," or whatever it is. So you have a whole year to complete the course, and I know sometimes things happen as at this point in time we're still in a pandemic. So we are always open to helping you be successful. So if you need longer than a year, that's completely okay. We understand because we want you to take your time. You can always reach out to us if you need an extension.

I already talked about listening actively and taking notes. So sitting down and making notes as you are going through the material. First, maybe listening to it first, scanning through it, just a quick scan, and then going through it with pen in hand and writing things down. We talked out listening on the go and joining the Facebook group. Okay. I thought I might have missed something. I think I missed you have one whole year for the course. Okay.

All right. What is body image? So a few places that I pulled this information from is the Origins of Fatphobia by Dr. Sabrina Strings. Her work is amazing. I do follow I Weigh with Jameela Jamil. I know she's a controversial person, but I do like some of the things she has mentioned around weight as a person who has struggled with their weight. So there's lots of resources out there. Choose the ones that resonate with you. Sometimes I don't agree with everything someone is saying, but if there's something that touches me and I agree with it, I'll take from that what I need and if the rest of what they're doing doesn't speak to me on any way, then I move from that person because nobody I find in my world is going to be 100% onboard with all the things I believe in. We're going to have different opinions on a lot of things, and I don't cancel people all together because we don't completely perfectly align.

I have a friend who's conservative and I am not, and we have different ideals about how to end homelessness, right? So we have a different idea in policy. So we'll say her policy will be to hold public companies and private companies accountable for creating situations within their job space to build more housing or to donate or to give money to a situation. Whereas I believe that the government should be more responsible for creating opportunities to create more affordable housing, that we should be legislating a living minimum wage. We have just different policy ideas on how we end homelessness. Because I don't agree with her policies doesn't mean we can't be friends. We just have a different opinion on policy.

Where that cuts off for me is morality, right? When somebody doesn't like someone because they're part of the LGBTQIA community or somebody calls somebody out for something has to do with morality, being a moral person, showing up for everybody else, not being so individualistic that we forget that we're in a place of service to humanity and a place of connection to humanity.

That's how I determine who is in my friend group and whose content I want to listen to and whose opinions matter to me based on their morality, more or less, on their moral compass and maybe not so much on their social policies as long as at the end of the day we are in agreement that we need to end homeless. You have a way to do it your way. I have a way to do it my way. I hope we can meet in the middle, but if you are somebody who subscribes to White supremacy or any kind of racist notion or have said things that are antisemitic or sexist, you and I are in a different moral plane so we can't be friends. So that was my little aside around Jameela Jamil.

What is body image? Well, body image is ... I'm going to actually read the definition of body image because I really love the definition, and this is the definition I'm pulling from my book, Yoga Where You Are. So I'm going to read the definition that I wrote in this book. The term body image refers to the way we perceive our own bodies and the way we assume others perceive us. Body image is a collection of ideas based on how we see ourselves in relationship to the outside world. Do we see ourselves as

attractive, feminine, masculine, non-binary, able-bodied, in bodies with disabilities, in older bodies, in younger bodies, in larger bodies, in small bodies.

Our body image is influenced by messaging from friends, family, religion, culture, media, and society. Body image generally isn't based in fact. I'm going to read that again. Body image generally isn't based in fact and can be either positive or negative or it can flow between the two.

So in the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras 2.35, we are taught that settling the mind allows for hostilities to cease. We begin by ceasing hostilities toward ourselves and then we can begin ceasing hostilities towards others as well. When we allow our mind to settle, we begin to disengage from the cycle of insecurities that are born into our consciousness and subconscious lives. As we learn to release our attachments to the belief that our self-worth is skin deep, we begin to recognize that our attachments to the conventional are unnecessary. Body image is largely a product of learned conditioning.

Here are some of the facts about body image. So we'll keep moving. So keeping people focused on body dissatisfaction through marketing helps the cosmetic and diet industry remain profitable by presenting the physical ideal that is difficult to achieve and is a moving target.

So let's just think about body trending for a minute, how body trends have changed. I at this moment in time, September 2021, I'm 51 years old. I have watched body image trend over the last 50 years. When I was growing up and I make mention of this in the first installment of the Yoga and Body Image book, stories about beauty and bravery, I talk about when I was a child, seven or eight in the '70s, that the beauty ideal was Charlie's Angels, right? That was the big popular TV show on at the time. When I look back at that TV show, none of those women who represented Charlie's Angels had an incline. I couldn't in any way identify with any of them in my body shape.

We had Farah Fawcett for those of you who might know. You might have to look her up if you're not familiar. She's a beauty icon. She had an iconic poster in the '70s that everybody I knew had on their wall. There was Kate Jackson and there was another woman. I can't think of her name. It will come to me. They had a very particular body type. I knew very early on that that wasn't going to align with me and because I didn't look like these women. I wasn't White. I wasn't thin. I wasn't tall. I grew up thinking that I was never good enough or I was not beautiful or the narrative as long as I was showing up in black skin with thick lips and a big booty and big boobs for that matter because when my breasts came in pretty early life, which made my life pretty miserable, that set the tone for the rest of my existence as a little girl when I get that messaging at seven years old. It now becomes embedded in my brain.

I read a statistic very recently that by the time most young people are 10 years old, they have been inundated with over 20,000 images and narratives telling them that there's something wrong with their body because that's how the beauty, diet industry keeps us in a constant fog, if you will, of dissatisfaction. If we can constantly be picking at ourselves, then we're more likely to buy things that will make us feel better about ourselves or change our body much we think we're going to think our body.

So that's something that really hit home for me. I spent a lot of years fighting with my genetics, fighting with my body, fighting to fit the current trend of what a beautiful body look like. Here we are in 2021 at the time of this recording and the body trend has changed so much. So, we trended in the '80s to the supermodels who still very much had that very long limbs, very lanky movements, and small chests, still very tiny waists, and then, boom. We start in the 2000s and the Kardashians start the body trend to a big booty, a tiny waist, to full lips, to big breasts, to an hourglass aesthetic, which was something as a Black person who that had always been in my awareness, right? This was the bodies of my mother and my aunts and my sister, and we didn't have the bodies of the '70s that were considered beautiful.



So you can see that it becomes this moving target. What was popular as a body image in the 1970s is certainly different from the 21st millennium, right? So that we're seeing a lot of surgery, filters, a lot of augmenting the body to get the next body ideal, which is pretty much that ideal, a tiny waist, a big butt, all those things that were once demonized for Black folks and Black women in particular are now something that's coveted and people are willing to have surgeries. Lip injections, Brazilian butt lifts, these are two of the most popular surgeries that are happening in the 21st century, right?

So we have to be careful that we connect with the bodies that we're in and that we know that these bodies are hundreds, if not thousands of years of ancestry that has created this container in which your soul resides that is perfect for you. It is the lineage of your history. It is the connection to your ancestors. It is this perfectly crafted vehicle for you to live your life.

So if we could get away from how we allow ourselves to be constantly pulled into current body trends and stand in the bodies that we are in and allow those bodies to be considered beautiful as they are or you can be content that your body works for you in the best way it knows how., if we can get away from, "The new trend is this and the new trend is that and now I need to get a waist trainer," or whatever it is that is currently trending, we need to really step away from that and say to ourselves, "What is it that my body does for me every day? How is it that my body shows up for me every day and how is it that I can respect that, that sometimes my shoulder hurts and maybe I can't lift my arm very high, maybe that's okay and I work on something else. I work on standing poses or maybe I take a break all together," but to be really in relationship with your body and not in a battle with your body, trying to have it conform to a certain idealized standard that is going to be trended out in another five years. It will be interesting to see how the body trend will change.

I have no love for the manipulation through filters, surgery, and Photoshop that the current mavens of body image are doing. I think it's dangerous. I think the filters that we have on our phones that can allow us to enhance our pictures are also dangerous because it sets a very unrealistic narrative out there in the world and young people who I think are more savvy now than ever can also still be fooled into this insidious constantly seeking of perfection when perfection doesn't exist. Perfection is where you are now, whether your body is injured or whether your body has a disability or whether your body is plus size or whether you're struggling with something else. This is where you are right now.

So how can we start to connect with the body that we are in? I'm very aware that there are people who are born into or assigned the wrong gender at birth and that whole body image is another unpacking that needs to happen, and to allow people to be free to explore the fluidity of their gender and to make space for that and to have that be part of the narrative as well.

So body image is nuanced and it's evolving, and for some of us it started with not liking the way our bodies looked. For others it started being assigned the wrong gender at birth. For others it may be moving from an abled body to a disabled body or arriving in the world in a disabled body. All of those things are going to factor into the way that we look at ourselves. So it's important for us to start to change the narrative around non-conforming bodies. When I say non-conforming bodies, the body that society puts up as they think is beautiful or as more of an allowing the spectrum to blow out so that there's not one homogenous decision around what a good body is, that each body has its ups and downs, each body has its limits, each body is beautiful in its own way, and not beautiful in terms of having to be aesthetic because I like to get away from this idea of aesthetic beauty being the only kind of beauty a body can achieve.

I like the aesthetic to be a beauty of being the body be able to feel emotion, right? It's beautiful to feel loved. It's painful to feel excluded. It's joyful to see something wonderful happen or to experience something wonderful happening. It's great to move intentionally in a way that feels good in our body. That kind of beauty I think needs to be part of the narrative and the definition that allows the concept of

what a good body is to become expanded. The concept of a good body is not what has been idealized for centuries, but the concept of a good body is a body that shows up for you and that you can enjoy it in the best way that you can and that you have the opportunity to love and to share and hopefully to move in a way that works for you.

So how do we own our own self-image instead of allowing it to be defined by others? That's something that can be very personalized to us and it's going to be a journey that we have to take on our own. We have to start unlearning these learnt ideas that only certain things are acceptable, only certain things are beautiful, and speak to the fact that everybody has their own internalized identity of who they are and what they look like and giving people the opportunity to express that and to continue to broaden the narrative so that it includes all of us and not just some of us. Wow. That was a lot. All right.

So I found this graphic on the interwebs. I pulled it from Instagram. It's from Crazy Head Comics. I just loved the graphic in and of itself. It had a lot of different things going on on it. So I wanted to remind everybody this is what I'm talking about when we broaden the narrative around bodies, that centered is not able, some kind of perfect athletic aesthetic, youth, and often White is what we see as centered. So when we talk about body image, often our definitions of body image have been pulled by the dominant culture. When I say the dominant culture, I'm talking about the people in power who have always had all the access to all the resources. So that's what we're talking about when we talk about dominant culture.

So if you think for a moment, who are you most likely to see when you Google the image yoga? Who are you most likely to see when you Google the image beauty? Who shows up in the first couple of pictures or images and how far down the Google diaspora do you have to go before you see someone with a disability, someone in a plus size body, someone who is older, somebody who is a person of color? So just think about those first three or four images that come up or maybe just look at the images that come up in your mind and I don't want you to beat yourself up about this because you remember that this is a social conditioning that has been going on for a long time. Okay?

So this is just a repeat of what I said. I probably pulled this right from my book, but here there's a couple of other things here, how you feel about your body including your height, shape, and weight, how you sense and control your body as you move, and how you physically experience or feel in your body. Many of us internalize messages starting at a young age that can lead to either a positive or a negative body image. This is from NEDA. Having a healthy body image is an important part of our mental wellbeing.

So if we're not feeling good in our bodies, we're less likely to engage with the rest of the world. We're less likely to move our bodies in a way that feels good or if we have anger or have a negative body image, any kind of physical movement that we do is often equated with changing our body and not necessarily equated with moving for the sense of joy or intention. So movement for joy is just doing something you like. For me, it's riding my bike outside, which I haven't done a lot this season because my young son has taken it, so now it's his bike. So now I go walking and that's something I like. I'm always looking at people's gardens or flowering trees or I happen to live next to St. Claire so I often take a walk down to the lake. So these are the things that I do that are joyful.

Intentional movement for me is lifting weights and perhaps going for a run or maybe doing something that's a little bit more challenging to the body. It's intentional because I know that it's a benefit for me. I look at it as an investment in my future self. So as a woman of an interesting age, I have to put some weights in my hand in order to continue to build bone density and to not lose too much muscle mass so that later in life I'm able to climb stairs, get up and down off the couch, heaven forbid get up and down off the toilet, reach things in my house, if things fall on the floor I'm able to get them.

So being strong enough, hopefully, to pick up grandchildren if that's in my future or help my sons in some kind of way. So I want to make sure that with intentional movement that I'm making an



investment in my future self. Intentional movement can be anything. For me, it's putting weights in my hand and it's something that I just started to do in the past three or four years as I rapidly form in through my 50s. No. As I begin to get older, I want to maintain my standard of living and I want to make sure that I can enjoy my life for as long as possible. So these are things that I contribute to as intentional movement.

I don't always love it, but I know it has a benefit to me. I don't always love it in the moment. Often when it's done I feel amazing but I know that these intentional movements are paired very heavily with my joyful, mindful movement and sometimes those two connect for my mental wellbeing, mental health wellbeing. Okay.

So continuing with that, here's some more notes on that. Our culture, our society, our family, our friends contribute to our attitudes around bodies that we see, bodies that we're in and how we interact in the world. We're encouraged from a young age to idealize a body type, right? Social media and social trends reinforce that.

So within body image, we have to remember how we show up in the world. This body is how I show up in the world. Your body is how you show up in the world. So every single body with all of its magic and all of its ethnicity and all of its abilities are going to be received in a different way, right? So when I show up in the world, often but not always, I face discrimination based on my race, on my size. People who are living with disabilities may be judged on their ability. People who are gender fluid may be judged on their gender. When an older person shows up in a situation, people make certain assumptions about older folks.

We have to remember that people make assumptions about people who are large size body. People make assumptions about people who are in smaller bodies. So exposure to these daily microaggressions at home, at work, and in society can cause you to feel like you don't measure up because you show up with this face.

So illnesses, skin conditions, disabilities, accidents also impact how we see ourselves. I really watched my oldest son who always had swagger, who had swagger from the onset of birth when he became a teenager and started suffering with some moderate acne, I wouldn't call it severe, it was moderate, but it was enough to make him question himself. A kid who never questioned himself before, a kid who felt really powerful and it was something that I really strive to help him feel good about himself and his body, and it was devastating, devastating, devastating to watch him lose his confidence because of acne.

Also, I noticed with my son and it breaks my heart a lot of his friends are over 5'10", a lot of his friends are six feet. My son is 5'8" and he really struggles with being the shorter ones of his friends. He thinks that girls aren't going to like him and he thinks that he may not date because he's 5'8" and I just keep telling him, "It's not a thing. Your dad is, dare I say, 5'4"," and we always tell Nathan that, "People will love you for you and not what you look like. If people love you for what you look like, then that's not somebody that you want to spend your time with."

It's interesting to see how the messages creep in are insidious because our whole lives we've been training our boys that, "This container that your soul lives in we want to take care of it and we want to be happy with it, and we want somebody to love us for the entirety of who we are and not to be caught up on this, what this looks like." Yet, they go out into the world and they get those insidious messages. As much as I try to wedge myself between those messages, they're still a large part of their experience.

To watch them succumb to it reminds me of how I succumbed to it as a kid and it led me down a path of disordered eating and a path of harming and a path of overexercising, you name it, in order to fit this ideal which was never ever going to I was ever going to fit and it was never mine to begin with. This idea was planted.

So the constant unlearning is going to be something that we have to connect with and we have to do our own work around it, right? This is part of your SwáSthya, your self-study, your relationship to your body and how that's going to teach up, how that's going to show up in your teaching, and making sure that we're very clear about who we are, what we believe.

Noticing and witnessing when we're making these assumptions about bodies with disabilities or bodies that are fluid in gender or bodies that are not White bodies, what are our reactions, what are our belief systems, how do we break these things down, and to stop looking at bodies with disabilities as a tragedy, that bodies with disabilities also need to be celebrated as good bodies. Anybody that moves through the world and allows you to experience joy and love and lust and understanding and divine connection is a good body.

So developing space for body neutrality and body positivity. I'm moving away from the word of body positivity because it feels a little co-opted, but we want to let go of body snarking and call it out when we see it. I have to say when I first started, I did a lot of body snarking when I started teaching and I'll explain how that happened.

I had a teacher who was in a bigger body, not very big, but bigger compared to the other teachers that were practicing in this particular lineage and she got a lot of fat for it. She would constantly to me, "If I could only lose 50 pounds I would be in the right body for this practice." Did you just hear that? "I would be in the right body for this practice." That's not how we want to look at this. "Is this practice right for my body and if not, is there another practice that can suit my body better?"

That hurt my feelings because she was incredible teacher but she spend a lot of time when she was teaching snarking about her body, making comments about her big thighs or her bottom or her shoulders or her belly, and I think she did these things to be relatable perhaps because a lot of us do that, right? When we come in to fitness spaces or we're trying clothes on or we come on to our yoga mat, there's a lot of disparaging remarks we might make about our body because maybe it's not as flexible as it once was or maybe we've had an injury or maybe we have an illness or we've gotten older or whatever it is. We often can be very disrespectful to our body and do a lot of body shaming or because we're insecure in our own bodies we'll body shame other people like humiliate somebody else for their bodies or roll up on people when they come to yoga class.

I just saw this not too long ago when a bigger person came in to a yoga class and when everybody was putting their things away and leaving the class, another student came up to that person and was like, "Good for you coming to yoga class. If you keep it up, you'll get really fit and lose all that weight." I don't remember anybody asking you for your opinion.

So I always insert myself in these situations because I feel as a yoga teacher I'm developing a space for body neutrality and acceptance and I will just say to that person offering advice or a compliment to the person who showed up to class. I just say things like, "It's interesting you should say that. What makes you think people come to yoga class because they want to lose weight? Why can't we just come to yoga class because we like to stretch our bodies? Perhaps maybe we don't make comments to people we don't know what their journey is about because it's really incredible that we feel we know best and that it's in our best interest to tell other people what we think."

That is an act of, I think, narcissism and individualism, which I think a rampant, ongoing problem in the 21st century from what I can see. So it's best to keep our comments to ourselves and if you see this behavior happening in your yoga spaces, it's your job as a yoga teacher to intervene.

I often say when I see people who are uncomfortable with people who are different than them rolling up into yoga spaces and then behaving in a way that others the person who's nonconforming, I call that

out. I know it's going to be hard for a lot of you who maybe want to keep the peace, but this is yoga for all, right? We want to make sure that our students feel comfortable coming in to the spaces.

So I often will say, "Part of our self-study and part of being spiritual is to mind your own business, so we're not commenting on our bodies, we're not commenting on everybody else's body. We're here in collaboration and in connection with each other to uplift, to joy, to breathe, and to learn. So commenting on other people's bodies or making people feel bad for what they can and can't do is not what we're doing in this practice."

I won't just say that out loud getting in class but I am that person. So it will be up to you to define or find a way that it makes most sense for you to intervene in those situations where our students are encouraging plus size people to keep at it so that they will get this non-existent idealized body type that may or may not happen or may or may not create happiness for them. So I think it's really important that we keep our comments to ourselves. There's a way to say it. You just have to find it.

So let's look at a covert way of body shaming that we do to ourselves and sometimes we overtly do to each other. "I feel fat today." How many of us have said that in our lives? Right? Ask yourselves where that comment comes from because I can assure you it's not a comment you arrived at on your own. It is a learning or a training that's been set aside for you.

"You are so brave for exercising or wearing certain clothes." This comes up a lot when I wear a bra top and leggings. I don't generally practice in that bra tops and leggings just because I'm always worried that my girls are going to fall out because they have fallen out while I'm teaching. That's a story for another day. So I try to wear a bra top and then a tank top overtop in case the girls decide they want to escape. So that's one of the things that I find people saying all the time, "You're brave to come in to class in a bra top." I'm not. I'm not brave.

It's hot in here. I recently discovered hot yoga. I hated it for a long time. I made peace with it now. I think it's because of menopause, but who knows? So now I do a lot of practicing in much smaller clothes but it took me a long time to move out of only black clothes into loud and beautifully patterned tights, which actually Amber introduced me to to be quite frank in the first filming of this Yoga for All. I was wearing a lot of really dark clothes and hiding a lot of the time.

So part of me moving away from my body shaming of myself was to just wear what felt comfortable and then I was blessed enough that yoga clothing was becoming more extensive in their sizing.

Asking people do you look fat and spending the majority of your life trying not to look fat, I think that's a colossal waste of time. No matter what I wear, I'm a plus size person, I'm going to look fat in it, and I'm just going to make peace with it. I want to wear stuff that looks cute and flattering, but whatever I wear I'm going to look fat because this is my body and I made peace with that. I'm not spending my whole life trying to look thin. To me it flies in the face of Brahmacharya, which traditionally, of course, is meant to be a celibacy. I'm married so I'm not celibate. So I redefine it for myself as the right use of energy, and the right use of energy is not spending my whole life trying not to look fat but just wearing things that make me feel comfortable and look good.

When you see somebody who might be in a much smaller burger, same thing as eat a burger, that's not cool. "Real women have curves." That's garbage. "Did you lose weight? You look great." We need to stop saying that. That's another covert way we do body shaming is commenting on people's bodies or asking people if they lose weight.

I get that a lot because I suffered through. I've been in remission for a while a thyroid issue, and so I lost a lot of weight and you'll see it through the videos. You'll see Dianne at every size in these videos because I was battling an illness at the time.

So asking people, "Did you lose weight? You look great," I would often come back and go, "Yeah, I did. I did lose weight, but I was really sick and that's why I lost weight and I almost died, but thanks for asking."

"Do you really want to eat all that?"

"Yes, I do. Mind your business."

"You have such a pretty face." How many times that I hear that in my life? "If you just lost the weight, you have such a pretty face."

Fat and ugly are not synonymous and we need to detach those two words. I'm so sick of that.

"You're lucky you can eat whatever you want."

How many times have we all said that or wished for that? It's time to change the narrative around that.

"That makes you look so skinny."

Let's move away from this covert body shaming. It's not helpful and it doesn't elevate our consciousness. It doesn't elevate our energy, and it only serves to bring us deeper down into the rabbit hole of dissatisfaction within our bodies if we're constantly hearing these words. These are microaggressions, if you will, right?

Saying things, "That makes you look so skinny," or "That looks good on you," we want to change the energy and we'll talk about more of this in language. We'll come back to this particular, "That makes you look skinny." So wait for it. It's coming. Okay.

So I'm sharing with you the Origins of Fatphobia. This is a very good friend of mine, Dr. Sabrina Strings. She used to be a professor at the University of California at Irvine. I've heard that she's now teaching at the University of British Columbia. She has written a book, and I'm going to ... I think the book is on my shelf. I meant to pull it before I started here, but let me just lean back in a way so I can get it for you. This is what it looks like. Okay? Fearing the Black Body. This is an excellent book and it will be in the reading and resource list for you so that you're able to do it. She's going to be talking about it here on Now This.

So I'm going to take a few minutes to share this with you and we can see the direct link between fatphobia and racism. Enjoy.

All right. We are going to share that link so that you're able to watch it. So it will be inserted in here. You'll be able to watch it. I can't get it to start right now, but during the edits, we'll edit it back in. So let's move on to the next slide.

I talked a little bit about this already, how body image has changed over time, how it's trended. So I'm going to show you a little bit more of what I was talking about in trending. So I pulled this graphic off the internet on how the perfect body has evolved throughout time, right? So we've gone from a very soft plus size body to that very corseted hourglass shape, to a more athletic body, and everything in between. So it's been really interesting to watch how through time the perfect body has evolved, and we'll be able to share these links with you so that you can watch the videos.

So we see how body image has evolved from the '50s to the '80s, which is when I grew up when I was a teenager in the '80s all the way up to 2020s. There's Kim Kardashian as one of the people who have been a part of this body evolution.

Also, we'll share this video with you on gender identity, which I've talked about at the beginning on how that impacts our vision or our understanding of gender identity and body image.

The evolving, talking about trans body positivity, which I think is really important. We'll also be sharing the link of that for you, so stay tuned. All of this will be available to you, and trans students explaining

why pronouns are important. Finally, talking about body dysmorphia, and practices for curating body liberation. So that's what we want to do through our practice. This is what we want to do for everyone, right? We want to make sure that people have the opportunity to have body liberation, and we do that by curating our social media feeds.

So if you have a social media feed that makes you unhappy or angry or makes you question who you are or your ability to be peaceful in your body, if there's a social media channel that makes you feel bad about yourself, then that's something that you don't need to follow. If you find toxic diet culture showing up in your feed, toxic people showing up in your feed, cultivate your feed. Block those channels or don't follow those particular influencers that make you feel bad about your body. I'm very careful about curating my feed and sharing the content of people that I know and love and when people reach out to me and either are disparaging to the people that I respect, then I block them because I don't have time for my social media feed to be a place where people are attacking each other or the spread of misinformation.

So part of curating my social media feed is that I only allow people to comment on my feed, people who follow me or I follow them, and what ends up happening if people have a problem with anything I've curated on my feed, they tend to slide into my DMs and then I just block them.

Abandoning diet culture, okay? That's something that's really important because diet culture is woven into everything we do and everything we see and how we interact in the world. We're always talking about what we're eating and how much exercise we're getting and all those things that trigger people into disordered eating, which is a big part of diet culture that has normalized disordered eating. We really want to make sure that we're not continuing to perpetuate that kind of culture within our space of yoga, where people are looking for body liberation.

Wellness, individual versus systemic. That's something that's really important. Individual wellness is largely determined by people's ability and access to wellness services. So if you come from a socioeconomic level that allows you the additional funds to participate in certain kinds of wellness, so you're able to go for massages, you have better access to more healthcare, you have access to more nutritious foods, that's very individual, right?

So your individual wellness, you have the money to curate that, right? So there's a lot of people out there who do not. So the issue becomes systemic. Who has access to healthcare? What kind of healthcare do they have access to? Do they have access to get their prescription medication? Do they have access to see a physiotherapist if they're hurt? Do they have the medical access to get the proper help? Does the medical system discriminate against them? So there's lots of things that tell us whether wellness is individualized, something that we can do for ourselves as opposed to systemic, the limited access that certain economic groups and social groups and ethnic groups have to healthcare. These are very real things.

I do find that the yoga and wellness industry can be dangerous in excluding people who don't have the financial resources to pay for certain types of wellness practices, which is why we need to create a democratic approach to wellness, right? Something that we teach wellness doesn't have to be getting a massage or a manicure or a facial or whatever it is that we see wellness as being on that frame, that going for a walk, spending time away from social media, eating foods that make you feel good, connecting with people who lift your spirit, taking a nap, finding a yoga practice, things that don't cost you anything are a big part of your individual wellness, but we also need to pushback against systemic inequities that don't allow everybody the same access to getting well if they are sick.

Adopting the health at every size principles and so this is a principle created by Dr. Lindo Bacon. You will be able to hear about this because Amber is going to speak very broadly on this and is going to drill

down deeper and give you principles and insights into the health at every size. We also want to adopt weight neutral ideologies instead of being fat is bad and being thin is good. It's not as easy as all of that. So we really need to drill down and understand what weight neutral ideologies are, which will also be discussed in the health at every size module.

Cultivating a self-care practice, and I talk a little bit about that in wellness and individual wellness. Again, self-care practices can be disengaging from social media. One of the self-care practices that my actual therapist gave me and I wrote it down for this idea, she had said to me literally yesterday that I do not always have to be creating content for the world, that I can have things that are personal to my wellbeing. I thought that was brilliant. As she was writing this down, I found myself going, "Oh, I can make a meme out of this and I could talk about this and share this wonderful information with everybody else who could use it."

I'm thinking I'm forever in that place of service to others as opposed to sometimes cultivating just a care practice for myself, that everything that I do doesn't have to be in service to the world. A lot of what I do is in service to the world, but some of it can be just in service to me. That is a lot of the self-care as a revolutionary act that we've heard from Audre Lorde that we need to take care of ourselves first, especially if we are people of color or we're people from historically excluded populations where the onus has always been our work is our worth and if we're not working to support the dominant culture or to make sure the world feels more just that we have no value.

To be honest, that's something I've been struggling with quite frankly in my own self-study, that what is my worth in the world. Is my worth in the world what I offer everybody else at the expense of my own wellbeing? This has been my trigger moment for me, my thought process for me. Can I really step back and make sure that my life isn't always about pleasing others and that it's okay to have things that are just mine that I don't need to constantly be sharing or figuring out how to share with others to make their lives better while I'm not actually in true care of my own life?

So, self-growth continues and creating boundaries. I'm by far the worst person when it comes to boundaries. That's another thing that my therapist is constantly in conversation with me about is creating boundaries and say no and being okay with saying no and not having guilt for saying now and connect. One of the ways that I do something that's just for me is I connect with nature. Often it's pulling weeds in my garden, which is a metaphor for pulling weeds in my life, and seeking joy, and finding my purpose for myself, right? Not always on the bigger scale, but sometimes the purpose of my life is to take a nap because I'm tired. That's something we want to think about in our practices for body liberation as teachers and possibly as students.

So just to recap, we're curating our social media feeds, making sure there's stuff on there that uplifts us and makes us feel good and makes us think. Abandoning diet culture because that serves no one, but I think it's a 60 or 90 billion dollar industry at this point, and I would just wrap plastic surgery in that as well.

Wellness, individual versus systemic, the things that we can do individually that can help us feel good. I like to think of that as possibly wellbeing versus wellness and systemic wellness, who has access to it and who does not.

The health at every size principle, which Amber will dive deeper in to, figuring out how we don't constantly be looking at our weight as a determinant of our worth. So we want to be talking about weight neutral ideologies, cultivating a self-care practice whether that's going for a walk or taking a nap or eating your favorite food or for some of us that might mean taking a vacation, taking time off, going for a massage. It's really something that doesn't require a lot of money or privilege or power. It's something that we hopefully can do for ourselves within ourselves and figuring out how we can do that



at any socioeconomic group or level. Connecting with nature. Hopefully, you can go outside. It's safe to go outside and take a breath outside, and seeking joy, and knowing that your purpose in life is to be happy.

All right. Embodying practice, how do we apply what we have learned? So based on our discussions today, what are some of the ways that you can start to embody this practice for yourself and for your students? So I'm going to ask you to create a list of concrete steps that you can implement today to help change your relationship with body image, whether it's your own or your perceptions of bodies that you see on the street or challenge maybe some limited thinking that you might have been taught, that might have been learned that perhaps taking moments of self-care or selfish I hear a lot of that in my West Indian culture, in my mother's generation. That was not something that was done.

So sometimes that often can look like or be defined as being selfish, but what are some concrete steps you can take to start to open your mind and your awareness around what it looks like to embody the practice of creating a body, either a body neutral position, a body respect position, a body acceptance position and dare I say it, and this is really last on the list because sometimes this may never happen, a body loved position. That's a place where I am in.

Know that this acceptance and respect around your body ebbs and flows like everything in the universe, ebbs and flows. Some days you feel fantastic and you're like, "Look at me. I'm rocking it. I'm feeling it. I'm all about it," and then other days not so much. So I'm going to encourage you, if you will, to take some time and explore what these things are. Okay? It doesn't have to be all or nothing. It can be all or something.

Oops. I skipped across a little quick. I'm a little button happy there. So create an action plan, first and foremost. So schedule your self-care. I showed you my phone. Schedule it, whether it's once a week or once a day or whatever it is, five minutes a day, whatever that is. Make time for joyful and mindful movement, whether it's going for a walk or doing a little asana or perhaps you have a Pilates practice, whatever it is, whatever it is that makes you feel good in your body. Taking a nap, whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever.

Be mindful of what influences you and to change those inputs that keep you from appreciating your body. So if there's inputs coming in from the world that is making you critical of your body and wanting you to change your body, ask yourself why. Ask yourself if it's worth it than the benefits. If you feel it's worth it than the benefits, by all means go ahead, but see if you can find joy in just being where you are because I find if we sometimes, I'm not going to say all the time, if we're constantly looking at changing our bodies, sometimes there's never a moment of peace. You never get an opportunity to be at peace, that you're forever trying to change yourself, and I see that in the plastic surgery world where a little plastic surgery is great, but a lot becomes an obsession.

Here's your reflections from this module, stuff that you can do a journal prompt. So you have a reflections journal in the extras in this course. So you can pull out your reflections journal. You can make your own reflections journal. I usually have one here on my desk, but I think it's in my work bag right now where I have all these little journals that have been gifted to me or I'm out at a bookstore and I see something and I think it's really great or you can literally journal on your phone or your computer, but let's do some reflection prompts. These are your personal reflections. They're not here to be marked. They're your personal reflections for you to start thinking about these things.

What is your current relationship with your body and how does that show up in your yoga practice, whether you're teaching or practicing? Think of the factors that have had an impact on the relationship you have with your body, whether it's something your parents have said to you or something that

you've seen over social media or something happened to you maybe when you were in school. See if you can factor in how those things show up for you.

Then have you experienced or have you ever done body shaming? How you body shamed somebody or have you been a victim of body shaming? How did that make you feel? What are some of the ways that we can stop doing that, stop thinking that, interrupt that when we see it happening? So these are the things I want you to think about in this first module. If you happen to have the book *Yoga Where You Are*, chapter two in this book really does a deep dive into body image and yoga. So you can check out this book, *Yoga Where You Are*, if you have it, and chapter two really takes a deeper dive into this. It's another great resource that will be on your resource list.

Stay tuned. We will be linking to the videos if we haven't already linked to the videos in here. Watch it all, take it in, sit with it. This is a deep, deep, deep, deep dive into some of this material and it might be the first time you're learning about some of these things. So sit with your emotions, sit with your thoughts. Perhaps share in the Facebook group if you want to share. Perhaps reach out to others in the course and see how they feel, and really start to think about how it is we want to show up in the world for each other and for ourselves. All right. I'll see you in the next module.